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Jesse Craig

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Commissioner Ekern

Commissioner's Column

In just 45 minutes on Feb. 12, 2008, we experienced a vivid reminder that VDOT's role as an emergency responder is vital to the movement of people, goods and services throughout Virginia and along the entire East Coast. As temperatures dropped just a few degrees at the Springfield Interchange during rush hour, an expected rain storm turned to ice and one of the nation's largest highway interchanges completely shut down for more than eight hours. It was a chilling reminder that we play a critical role in keeping Virginian's travelers safe 24/7.

This was just one day and one incident of hundreds we respond to each year every year. However, it illustrates some of the lasting lessons we have learned as our business continues to evolve. In the weeks that followed, we have worked to focus on our core mission. Similar to fire departments and police crews, VDOT is viewed by the citizens of Virginia as a core provider of emergency response activities. Whether it is a truck crash that closes the interstate for hours on end, flooding that washes away our bridges, hurricanes, snow and ice, or a flat

tire that hinders movement, the emergency response professionals are needed day and night to Keep Virginia Moving, and help people.

Over the next several months, I and the agency's leadership will work to ensure that we have the necessary policies and procedures in place so that snow-removal, incident response and emergency preparedness are addressed as more than just another maintenance activity.

As we move forward, we will work together to focus on our core mission—to plan, deliver, operate and maintain a transportation system that is safe, enables easy movement of people and goods, enhances the economy and improves our quality of life—even when emergencies arise in the commonwealth.

David S. Ekern

FEATURES



Rodgers Competes in National Strongman Competition

Salem District Construction Project Manager **Patrick Rodgers** doesn't take your typical vacation. His trip last November to Las Vegas, Nev. didn't find him by the pool or in a casino. Rather, Rodgers was flipping 800-pound tires and lifting 300 to 400 pound stones as a top competitor in the National Strongman Competition. The events require participants to move objects in ways that test their physical and mental strength and stamina.

Rodgers has competed in strongman competitions since 1996 and is the Virginia representative for the North American Strongman organization. At the event in Las Vegas, Rodgers finished 28 out of 62 competitors.

The strongman competitions, according to Rodgers, are more about achieving your personal bests than beating the athlete next to you. "Strongman is such a friendly arena to compete in. Everyone at the competition wants to see you do well. They help each other," said Rodgers. It's an attitude Rodgers also carries into other aspects of his life and work.

Rodgers trains year-round and hosts competitions in the Martinsville area. The next national competition is Labor Day weekend in Charlotte, N.C. For Rodgers, it will be another chance to win a pro card, the next level of strongman competition. In the meantime, he is helping others learn more about a sport he's come to love.

— Heidi Coy, Salem District



Twelve Graduate VDOT Leaders Program

It is not easy to lead a \$4 billion transportation agency. That's what 12 graduates learned over the last two years in a pilot program called Executive Leadership Preparation Program (ELP). ELP is an intense two-year, three-phase learning program that grooms the agency's senior managers for executive leadership positions.

Recently, 12 participants graduated from ELP, which initially began in 2005. Of the first group to complete the process, six have already achieved promotions to higher positions and many are helping coach the second class.

In addition to their current duties, **Cris Anderson, Rob Cary, Richard Caywood, Emmett Heltzel, Kenny Robinson, Jeff Rodgers, Mike Russell, Milton Thacker, Jim Utterback, Brenda Waters and Chris Winstead** spent many hours working on program assignments and participating in field assignments.

"ELP is different from most executive preparation programs because it is more than a training program. It is built on real-life experiences that elicit creativity and knowledge," said **Thelma Phillips**, who supervises ELP. "We are realizing numerous benefits to ELP. The graduates gain firsthand business experience and build important relationships to help them be more successful in their careers, while VDOT also creates a strong succession of leaders for the future."

— Rachel Llewellyn, Central Office



VDOT Says Slow for the Cone Zone

Eleven cones represented the lives lost in work zones last year. The cones were the focal point for a Work Zone Awareness Week event at the VDOT Worker's Memorial earlier this month. Employees from every district and the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance (VTCA) signed the cones to honor of those that died.

The memorial event was one of many initiatives during the week to remind drivers about their responsibility in keeping VDOT employees and contractors working on the road safe. Though the national recognition week gets lots of public attention, VDOT works year-round to educate motorists and employees about work zones.

"In our business we can not afford to let our guard down when it comes to work zone awareness," said **Ginger Quinn**, assistant state work zone safety coordinator. "VDOT employees and VTCA representatives visit driver education classes throughout the commonwealth each year to teach young drivers about safe driving techniques and seat belt use."

VDOT also has several internal education initiatives for its employees. "VDOT maintenance forces start each morning off with a safety meeting before they hit the roadway to tackle their daily assignment," continued Quinn. "We also recently released a mandatory Work Zone Traffic Control Training program for those who perform maintenance, inspection and design activities on the state right-of-way. These are just some of the many initiatives that make VDOT a leader in work zone safety though out the United States."

VDOT'S WORK ZONE SCHOOL EDUCATOR



Left:

Jesse Craig is one of many VDOTers that help educate young drivers about work zones.

Jesse Craig knows it can be difficult to grab and keep the attention of a roomful of teenagers.

So when the South Hill Residency special crews supervisor delivers his work zone awareness message to driver's education classes in the region, he takes as many visual aids as possible. More than 13 years of giving the talks, he has learned that signs, videos and real-world examples help bring the important topic to life.

"Students are always attentive and ask a lot of questions," said Craig, whose first classroom invitation was from his own son.

The subject is critical because about 2,000 work zone crashes occurred in 2007 with 11 people killed. Studies show younger, more inexperienced

drivers are most likely to be involved in crashes, which means the outreach efforts of Craig and other VDOT employees are potential lifesavers for those most likely to become crash statistics.

VDOT employees have already reached more than 17,000 students this year with work zone school presentations. In fact, VDOT is nearing the milestone of reaching 100,000 students since the program began.

In addition to raising safety awareness, the talks present opportunities for young people to learn about VDOT itself.

"During the class, I'm often asked why we make repairs to the road and how we do it," said **Wade Feller**, a superintendent at the Mt.

Jackson AHQ in the Staunton District. "They have a better understanding now for why we close a portion of the roadway."

William "Buzz" Bryant, transportation operations manager II at the Richmond District's Pocahontas AHQ, agreed. "They understand more than just work zones. They understand our responsibility to the community. I feel really good about that when I walk out of the classroom."

Hopefully, these messages will stick with the students for a lifetime. "We are doing more than reaching the student," said Bryant. "Maybe the next time they are riding with their parent or a friend and they approach a work zone, they'll say, 'Hey, this is a work zone, you need to slow down and pay attention.'"

MEET DAVID FIERRO, New Assistant Division Administrator for Public Affairs

David Fierro relocated to Virginia from Florida to join VDOT as the Assistant Division Administrator for Public Affairs in the Central Office. He joined the agency at the end of February.

Fierro has a long history with the transportation industry. Most recently, he served as the principle for a PR agency whose top clients were transportation organizations. He also spent more than 10 years with the Florida Department of Transportation. In fact, Fierro helped get out important information to the public following Hurricane Andrew that devastated a good portion of Florida in 1992.

Already in the few weeks since Fierro joined the agency, he has picked up on the special side of VDOT. "There is a resilience and sense of pride here. We have been through some challenges, but I sense that the people within this agency understand what it takes to overcome adversity."

So what does David do when he is not answering media calls and developing communications strategies? "My family is top on the list," said Fierro. "I spend my time with family and my extended church family; and with any time that is left, I try to catch as many Dodgers games as possible."



PROFESSIONAL NOTES

RETIREMENTS

William H. Bushman
scientist III
Central Office, 37 years of service

Claude Coles
transportation operator II
Richmond, 29 years of service

Champe C. Corbin
Ind acq & prop mgmt agent III
Fredericksburg, 42 years of service

Elmer L. Creasy
transportation operator II
Salem, 35 years of service

Larry M. Lee
transportation operations manager II
Hampton Roads, 30 years of service

Alvin V. Nelson
electronic technician I
Salem, 29 years of service

Walter P. Noell
transportation operator II
Salem, 8 years of service

William A. Petty
engineering technician III
Salem, 39 years of service

Ernest B. Sayers, Jr.
transportation operator II
Bristol, 15 years of service

Laura L. Southard
PR and marketing manager II
Central Office, 18 years of service

Robert G. Tallent
transportation operations manager II
Richmond, 38 years of service

OBITUARIES

William Brown
63, Staunton District

Peggy Tinsley
72, Richmond District

Clifford Griffith
97, Salem District

Elmer Creasy
60, Salem District

James Brown
69, Salem District

Rubbie M. Samuel
61, Salem District

CAREER MOVES / PROFESSIONAL NOTES

Langston Williams, Jr.
named general administration
manager II, Staunton District

Gary McDorman
named environmental specialist I,
Staunton District

Guy Tyrell
named engineering technician IV,
Staunton District

Barton Thrasher
named assistant state location and
design engineer, Central Office

Harold Davison
named transportation operations
manager, Staunton District

Shannon D. Cotulla, P.E.
named assistant district
administrator, Lynchburg District

Lorraine Davis
received her Senior Right of Way/
Appraisal (SR/WA) designation,
Staunton District

BIRTHS

Anthony Caesar
born Jan. 30 to Sheanita Carter,
Human Resources,
Central Office

Samantha Leigh
born March 4 to Robert Hanson,
Operations Planning,
Central Office

Audrey
born Feb. 28 to Yingmin Zhou, P.E.,
Bridge Division,
Bristol District

NEW TO VDOT

Monya McMichael
engineering technician I,
Staunton District

Jordan Watson
transportation operator II,
Lynchburg District

Keon Pulliam
transportation operator II,
Lynchburg District

Donald Sura
transportation operator II,
Lynchburg District

Emmett Montgomery, Jr.
transportation operator II,
Staunton District

Clarence Campbell, Jr.
transportation operator II,
Staunton District

Robert Cash
transportation operator II,
Staunton District

Charles Gill
engineering technician I,
Staunton District

George Harper
bridge engineer,
Fredericksburg District

Thomas Moore
construction inspector senior,
Fredericksburg District

Derek Scott
equipment operator II,
Fredericksburg District

Shazak Ali
ICAS manager,
Fredericksburg District

Ryan Thomson
location and design project manager,
Richmond District

Around the State



HAMPTON ROADS DISTRICT

It is no secret that Hampton Roads District technicians strive for excellence, but now they can prove it. Forty-six employees at the district's eight repair shops currently hold 452 Automotive Service Excellence certifications (ASE). To achieve ASE, employees provide proof of two years' work experience and take tests administered through the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence. Six shops—Franklin, Accomac, Williamsburg, Norfolk, the District, and Elizabeth River Tunnels—have also earned the ASE Blue Seal. To qualify, at least 75 percent of technicians working at the shop must be ASE certified, and at least one technician must be ASE certified in each area of service offered. Pictured above are **Gaylord Ambrose, Ben Carroll, Jack Phipps** and **John Bishop** of the Franklin Residency Shop.



OPERATIONS AND SECURITY DIVISION

The VDOT Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) helped train seven new Virginia Capitol Police in an "Active Shooter" school exercise where a mock shooter is reported in a local school. CERT members were activated to find and aid multiple victims within the school. **Sue Maddox-Toth, David Bailey, Bill Kane, Samuel Henderson, Bill Callan, Kevin Dyer, Karen Blaha** and **Jim Swisher** from VDOT's CERT helped the police in their mock event. Operations and Security Division's Assistant Division Administrator **Mike Washburn** played the shooter. Some children and grandchildren of VDOT employees got into act, too, by playing wounded students. Crystal Greene, Tony Yepes, Beth Gill, Deanna Gill, Hannah Redford, Derek Bailey and Zack Haeffling, who were all on spring break, bore fake injuries and were painted with fake blood.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

Each year, thousands of Adopt-a-Highway groups collect about 300,000 bags of trash from 20,000 miles of Virginia's roads. Volunteers are asked to pick up litter along their adopted road at least four times a year. VDOT tries to make that a bit easier by promoting two statewide pick-up days each year. This year's events are April 12 and September 13. This gives us a chance to promote the program statewide through the media and to remind motorists to watch out for our volunteers. Residency coordinators provide volunteers with signs and safety vests to keep them visible to motorists. VDOT crews pick up bagged litter after the event is over.

LYNCHBURG DISTRICT

In October 2007, the Lynchburg District determined about 475 employees would need training in the new federally mandated work zone safety program by July 1, 2008. Ten employees stepped up to help the district meet its goal. The district's new trainers are: **Ronnie Adcock, Greg Tomlin, Billy Mann, James Gunnell, Mark McKissick, James Seate, Mark Metzger, Willis Adcock, Gary Tanner** and **Shane Weakley**. Basic Work Zone Training will be offered to maintenance employees, and Intermediate Work Zone Training is open to construction employees, regional work zone safety coordinators, district safety engineers, contract monitors, traffic control supervisors and land development/permit specialists. The initial "train-the-trainer" sessions are complete and the team is gearing up for employee training.

WORKFORCE SAFETY AND HEALTH DIVISION

Whether working on a major project or simply holding a meeting, world-class safety organizations always start by ensuring safety standards are met. VDOT's Workforce Safety and Health Division is leading an comprehensive effort to help VDOT adopt a world-class safety culture where safety is the first priority for every employee - no matter your division, district or position. By putting safety first, we will save lives and reduce injuries. Look for a monthly column called Safety First-One VDOT in the Bulletin to learn how to make safety first for you at work and home.

FREDERICKSBURG DISTRICT

Congratulations to **Craig Donor**, equipment repair technician at the Saluda Repair Facility. Donor was recently named Public Sector National Technician of the Year by the Association of Equipment Management Professionals. The award is given in recognition of professionalism, technical skills, innovative trouble shooting and diagnostics, and for exemplary contributions to the profession. This is two years in a row that the Saluda repair facility has won this honor. **Bruce Nelson** was last year's winner of the same award.

Around the State

BRISTOL DISTRICT

Kudos to the dedicated group of Bristol District employees who coordinate work zone safety presentations at area high schools each year: **Melissa Eversole**, Wytheville Residency; **Marty Halloway, P.E.**, Tazewell Residency; **Shirley Head**, Wise Residency; **Debbie Teasley (Eller)**, Abingdon Residency; and **Ernestine Wright**, Jonesville Residency. On average, the coordinators will set up school presentations or information booths at 23 schools annually, reaching approximately 2,700 students. Along with employees from their respective areas, the groups ensure high school driver education students in southwestern Virginia realize the importance of work zone safety.

VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH COUNCIL

The Research Council knows that sometimes the best ideas come from years of experience, but also the fresh perspective of graduate students. With this in mind, the research of the department's graduate pavements program, created in 2005, helps provide Virginia's interstates and other roads a longer service life while advancing the practice of forensic pavement analysis. The program is a joint effort with U.Va.'s Center for Transportation Studies and VTRC. Research Council scientists, experts in pavements and pavement materials, structures and geotechnical engineering, comprise the faculty for the graduate pavements program. It is a winning partnership.

SALEM DISTRICT

Crews have started installing card-access locks on the doors of two buildings at the Salem District complex - the Administration Office and the Location and Design building. Employees will be required to swipe identification badges to enter. "In the employee survey distributed in 2005, employees identified safety as an area where they would like to see improvements made," said District Administrator **Richard Caywood, P.E.** "I hope these upgrades will provide an increased sense of security for people in these offices." The majority of district complex employees already have "smart badges" that will be remotely activated for access.

STAUNTON DISTRICT

Staunton District is taking extra steps to protect their facility and its employees. Employees received coded identification badges that can, if authorized, open the district office gate and/or open doors to electronically locked buildings. Access rights and times are determined by the employee's job and supervisor approval. New cameras are located throughout the complex, allowing security guards to monitor the complex, doors and intercoms. The security planning and implementation was led by **Danny Stevens**, the operations security division facilities manager and **Debra Dillon**, the district technology resource manager.

NORTHERN REGIONAL OPERATIONS

Timely, accurate travel information is critical in Northern Virginia. But, several of the region's 199 Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) are more than 20 years old, making maintenance and remote changes challenging. To meet the challenge, Northern Region Operations Planning and Programming has identified eight signs needing upgrades, 16 high-priority locations for new signs, and a few that will better serve motorists if relocated. The first changes will be on Interstate 66 between Route 50 and Washington, D.C. They hope to have the entire project in design by 2009.

LEARNING CENTER

VDOT has five leadership models that identify behaviors critical to success at five levels across the organization: teammate, supervisor, manager, senior manager, and executive. With these models, VDOT is saying "Behavior Matters." Customer focus and drive for results are common threads. The models focus on leadership at every level whether one hopes to advance, enhance their current performance, or prepare for a new opportunity, and they can help in coaching, development and candidate selection. Explore the many developmental opportunities VDOT has to offer in the Virtual Campus on InsideVDOT.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA DISTRICT

John Cox recalls a close call in Somalia, where his Marine Corps company rescued 85 embassy workers in 1991. "It was a nightmare," Cox said. Seventeen years later, Cox feels he's living a dream. He is the first veteran hired in Northern Virginia through the Wounded Veterans Internship Program, where he works in the permits division. Cox learned about the program at the Virginia Employment Commission. Cox couldn't imagine being unemployed, but his injury limits his range of motion. "If it wasn't for bumping into that guy in the Virginia employment office, I'd be at home watching TV," he said.

CULPEPER DISTRICT

Ending a long commute was the primary reason for applying for a job at VDOT, admits newly hired Equipment Repair Technicians **Michael Rance**, **Duane Ballinger** and **Richard Jones**. Since joining, they have discovered other benefits. "This job gives me opportunities for more training, tools are furnished and none of it costs me a thing," said Rance. "In the private sector you have to have at least \$10,000 worth of your own tools before you walk in the door," Ballinger said. With extensive experience and an eagerness to learn, these new employees are already an asset to the district.

RICHMOND DISTRICT

Two districts recently cut project time and citizen inconvenience by working together. An inspection uncovered deficiencies resulting in the closure of the century-old Route 620 bridge over the Appomattox River between Amelia County in the Richmond District and Cumberland County in the Lynchburg District. A detour was established via Route 621, but then the Route 621 bridge in the Lynchburg District was also closed. The new detours were long and citizens were unhappy. The districts joined forces to concentrate on getting the wider, less damaged Route 620 structure open. Their work paid off! Fifty-three days later the bridge reopened to traffic.

THE INBOX

Kings Dominion Appreciation Days Are Here!

VDOT employees and retirees are eligible for online discount tickets to Kings Dominion on special days throughout spring, summer and fall 2008. Adults pay only \$31.95, and juniors and seniors pay only \$23.95.

SPRING

April 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27

May 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26

SUMMER

June 20, 21, 22

July 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

August 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18

FALL

September 26, 27, 28

October 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19,
24, 25, 26, 31

Purchase your tickets online! Place your credit card order online at www.KingsDominion.com. Click on "tickets", then "corporate partner."
Our company ID is: **VDOT4** You can print your eTicket or have a ticket mailed to you if your order is made at least seven days in advance.